The background of the page is a composite image. On the left side, there is a close-up of a young woman's face, looking directly at the camera with a neutral expression. The right side of the background features a pattern of white stars on a dark background, reminiscent of the American flag. The entire image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter.

Indicators of Children's Well-Being

Behavior and Social Environment Indicators

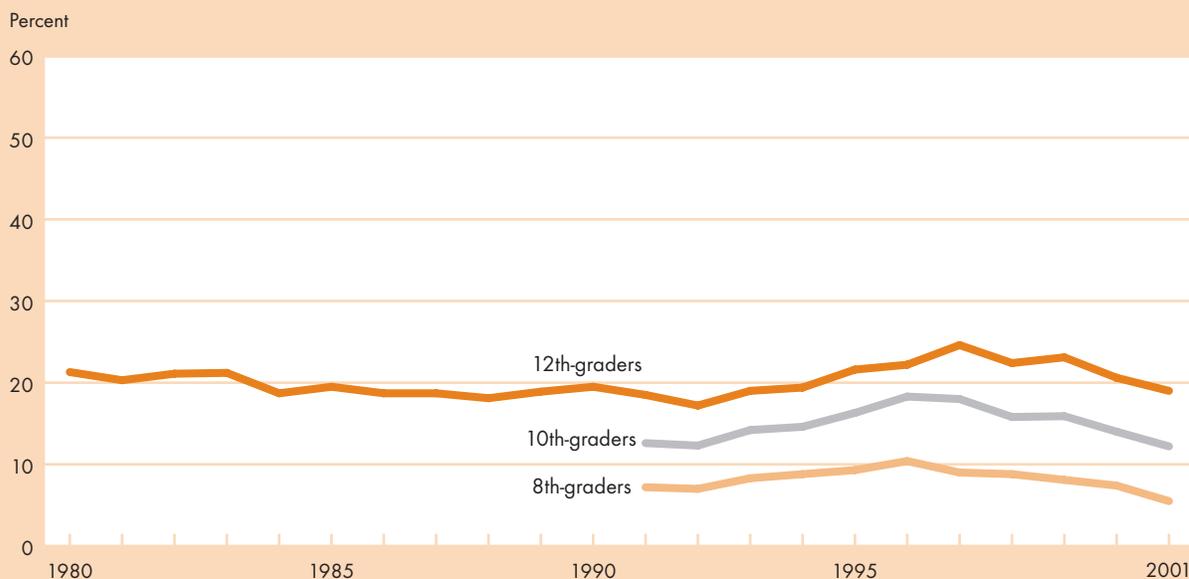
The indicators in this section present data on selected measures of young people's personal behavior and aspects of their social environment that may affect them. The indicators focus on illegal or high-risk behaviors, including smoking cigarettes, drinking alcohol, using illicit drugs, and involvement in serious violent crimes, either as offender or victim. In addition to these indicators, readers should consider positive behaviors of children, aspects of neighborhood environment, and other aspects of risk and problem behaviors in evaluating this dimension. Sources for some of these indicators are being sought.

Regular Cigarette Smoking

Smoking has serious long-term consequences, including the risk of smoking-related diseases and the risk of premature death, as well as causing increased health care costs associated with treating the illnesses.⁵⁵ Many adults who are addicted to tobacco today began smoking as adolescents, and it is estimated that more than 5 million of today's underage smokers will die of tobacco-related illnesses.⁵⁶ These consequences underscore the importance of studying patterns of smoking among adolescents.

Indicator BEH1

Percentage of students who reported smoking cigarettes daily in the previous 30 days by school grade, 1980-2001



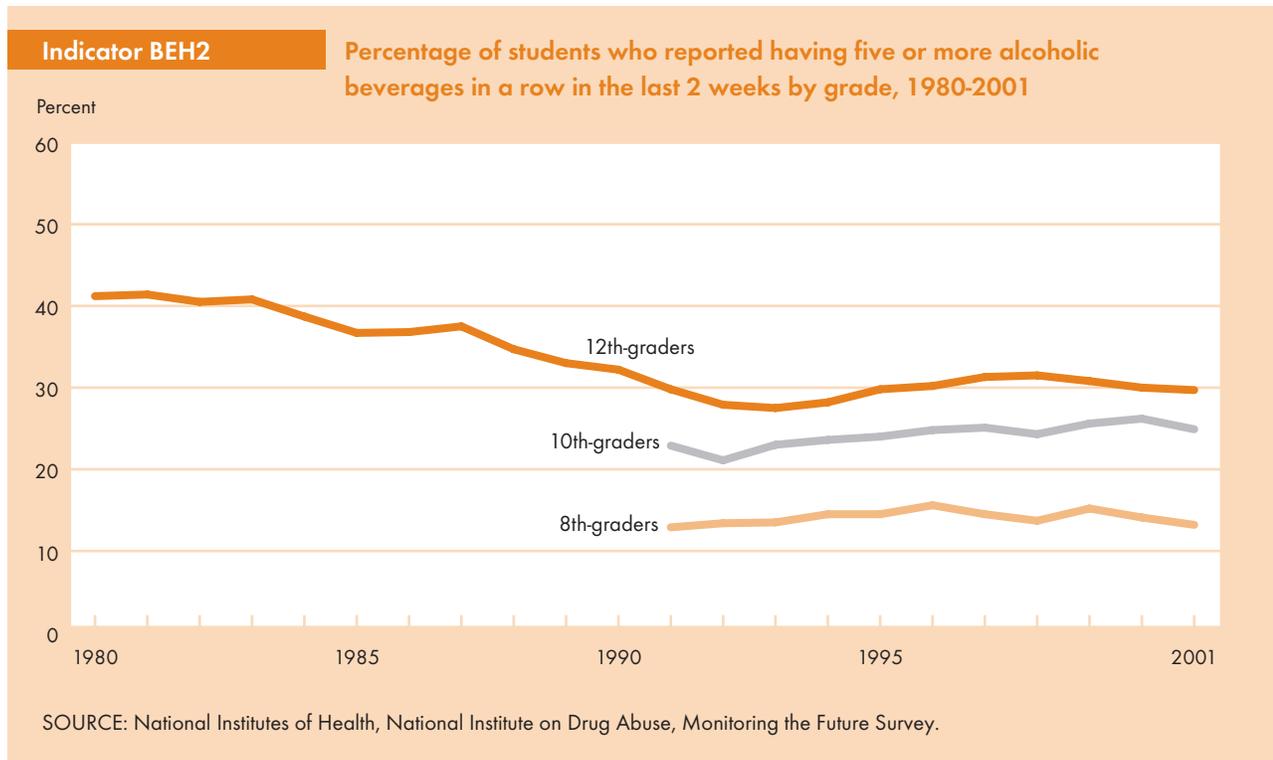
SOURCE: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Monitoring the Future Survey.

- Between 2000 and 2001, the rate of daily smoking in the past month decreased from 14 percent to 12 percent among 10th-graders and from 7 percent to 6 percent among 8th-graders. Recent peaks in daily smoking occurred in 1996 for 8th- and 10th-graders and in 1997 for 12th-graders. Rates have declined in all three grades since that time. The percentage of 8th- and 10th-graders reporting daily smoking in 2001 was the lowest in the 11 years data have been collected from students in those grades. For 12th-graders, the 2001 rate was the lowest since 1993.
- Long-term trends for high school seniors show that daily smoking declined from 21 percent in 1980 to 17 percent in 1992, increased to 25 percent in 1997, and declined to 19 percent in 2001.
- Males and females are similar in their rates of daily smoking. Among males, 6 percent of 8th-graders, 12 percent of 10th-graders, and 18 percent of 12th-graders reported daily smoking in the past 30 days in 2001; among females, the corresponding rates were 5 percent for 8th-graders, 12 percent for 10th-graders, and 19 percent for 12th-graders.
- Rates of smoking differ substantially between racial and ethnic groups. White students have the highest rate of smoking, followed by Hispanics and then blacks. Among high school seniors in 2001, 24 percent of whites reported daily smoking, compared to 12 percent of Hispanics and 8 percent of blacks.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table BEH1 on page 99. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Alcohol Use

Alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance during adolescence. Its use is associated with motor vehicle accidents, injuries, and deaths; with problems in school and in the workplace; and with fighting, crime, and other serious consequences.⁵⁷ Early onset of heavy drinking may be especially problematic, potentially increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes.



- In 2001, rates of episodic heavy drinking remained largely unchanged from 2000, with 30 percent of 12th-graders, 25 percent of 10th-graders, and 13 percent of 8th-graders reporting heavy drinking (i.e., having at least five drinks in a row at least once in the previous 2 weeks).
- Long-term trends for high school seniors indicate a peak in 1981, when 41 percent reported heavy drinking. Over the next 12 years, the percentage of high school seniors reporting heavy drinking declined gradually to a low of 28 percent in 1993. Since 1993, the prevalence of this behavior has held fairly steady. The rate in 2001 was 30 percent.
- Among 10th- and 12th-graders, males are more likely to drink heavily than are females. In 2001, 36 percent of 12th-grade males reported heavy drinking, compared with 24 percent of 12th-grade females. Among 10th-graders, 29 percent of males reported heavy drinking, compared with 21 percent of females. As adolescents get older, the differences between males and females in this drinking behavior appear to become more pronounced.

- Heavy drinking is much more likely among white and Hispanic secondary school students than among their black counterparts. For example, among 12th-graders, 12 percent of blacks reported heavy drinking in 2001, compared with 35 percent of whites and 28 percent of Hispanics. Similarly, among 10th-graders, 13 percent of blacks reported heavy drinking, compared with 27 percent of whites and 28 percent of Hispanics.

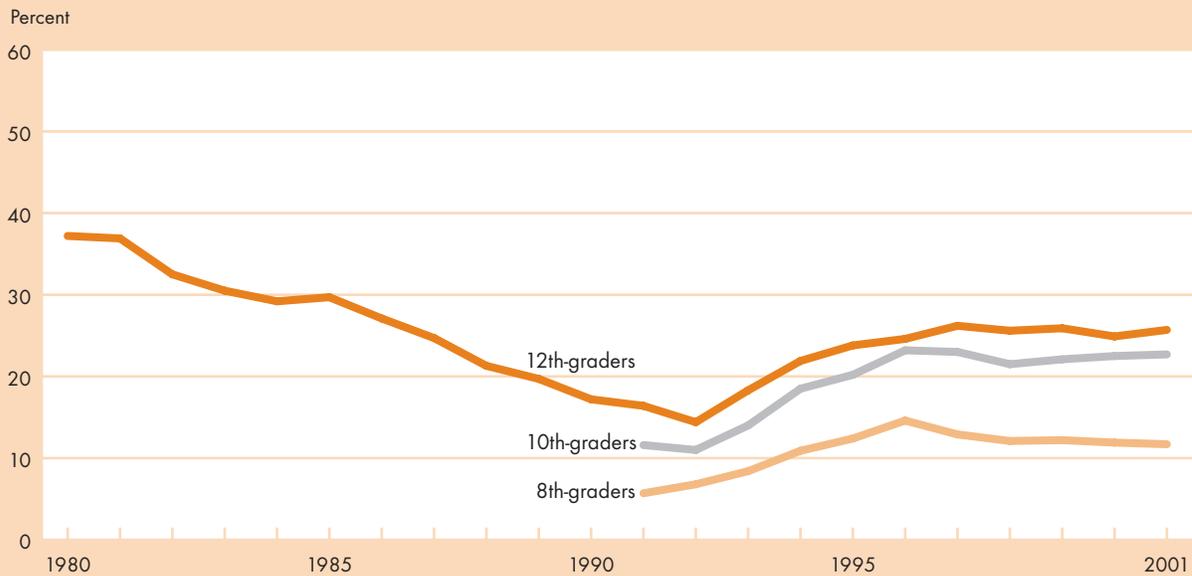
Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table BEH2 on page 100. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Illicit Drug Use

Drug use by adolescents can have immediate as well as long-term health and social consequences. Cocaine use is linked with health problems that range from eating disorders to disability to death from heart attacks and strokes.⁵⁸ Marijuana use poses both health and cognitive risks, particularly for damage to pulmonary functions as a result of chronic use.^{59,60} Hallucinogens can affect brain chemistry and result in problems with learning new information and memory.⁶¹ As is the case with alcohol use and smoking, drug use is a risk-taking behavior that has serious negative consequences.

Indicator BEH3

Percentage of students who reported using illicit drugs in the previous 30 days by grade, 1980-2001



NOTE: Illicit drugs include marijuana, cocaine (including crack), heroin, hallucinogens (including LSD, PCP, and ecstasy (MDMA)), amphetamines (including methamphetamine), and nonmedical use of psychotherapeutics.

SOURCE: National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse, Monitoring the Future Survey.

- The percentage of 8th-, 10th-, and 12th-graders reporting illicit drug use in the past 30 days remained stable from 2000 to 2001. In 2001, illicit drug use in this time period was reported by 26 percent of 12th-graders, 23 percent of 10th-graders, and 12 percent of 8th-graders.
- Eleven-year trends for 8th- and 10th-graders show that illicit drug use in the past 30 days increased substantially from the early to mid-1990s, reaching a peak in 1996 at 15 percent for 8th-graders and 23 percent for 10th-graders. Since then, rates have remained stable for 10th-graders. For 8th-graders, rates have declined, ending at 12 percent in 2001.
- Longer-term trend data for high school seniors indicate that past-30-day illicit drug use was reported by 37 percent in 1980, declined gradually to 14 percent in 1992, and then rose sharply, reaching 26 percent in 1997. Since that time illicit drug use has remained stable among high school seniors.
- In 2001 males were more likely to use illicit drugs than were females in each grade. Among 12th-graders, 28 percent of males, compared to 23 percent of females, reported past month illicit drug use. For 10th-graders, the corresponding rates were 25 percent and 21 percent, respectively, and for 8th-graders, they were 13 percent for males and 10 percent for females.
- White and Hispanic students generally have higher average illicit drug use rates than do black students. For instance, among 12th-graders in 2001, 19 percent of blacks, 27 percent of whites, and 25 percent of Hispanics reported past-month illicit drug use.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Table BEH3 on page 101. Endnotes begin on page 59.

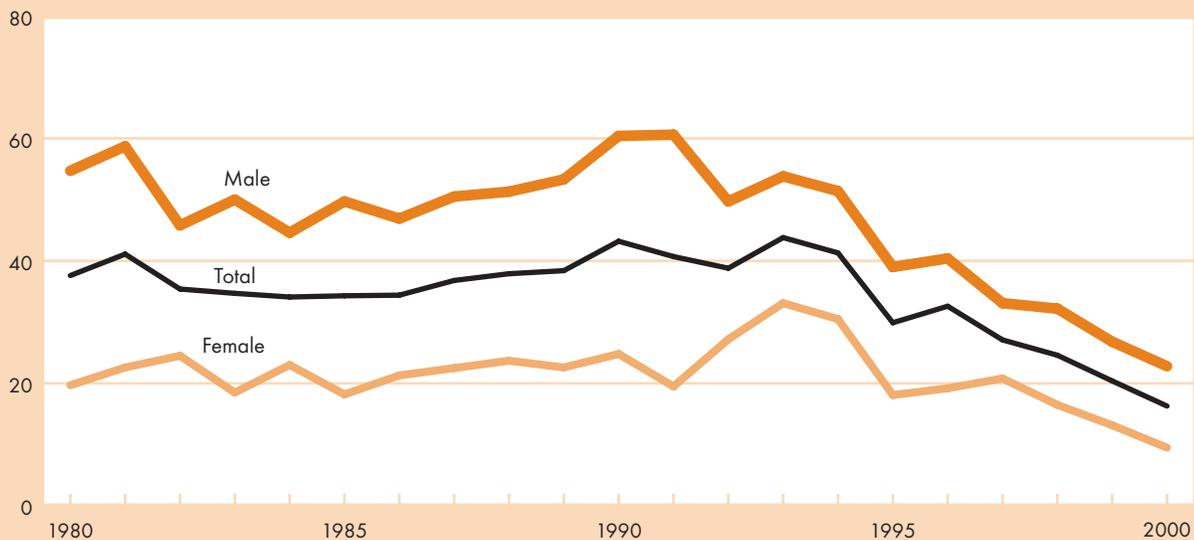
Youth Victims and Perpetrators of Serious Violent Crimes

Violence affects the quality of life of young people who experience, witness, or feel threatened by it. In addition to the direct physical harm suffered by young victims of serious violence, such violence can adversely affect victims' mental health and development and increase the likelihood that they themselves will commit acts of serious violence.^{62,63} Youth ages 12 to 17 are twice as likely as adults to be victims of serious violent crimes,⁶⁴ which include aggravated assault, rape, robbery (stealing by force or threat of violence), and homicide.

Indicator BEH4.A

Rate of serious violent crime victimization of youth ages 12 to 17 by gender, 1980-2000

Youth victims per 1,000 juveniles ages 12-17



NOTE: Serious violent crimes include aggravated assault, rape, robbery (stealing by force or threat of violence), and homicide. Because of changes made in the victimization survey, data prior to 1992 are adjusted to make them comparable with data collected under the redesigned methodology. Numbers for 2000 are preliminary and do not contain final homicide estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Supplementary Homicide Reports.

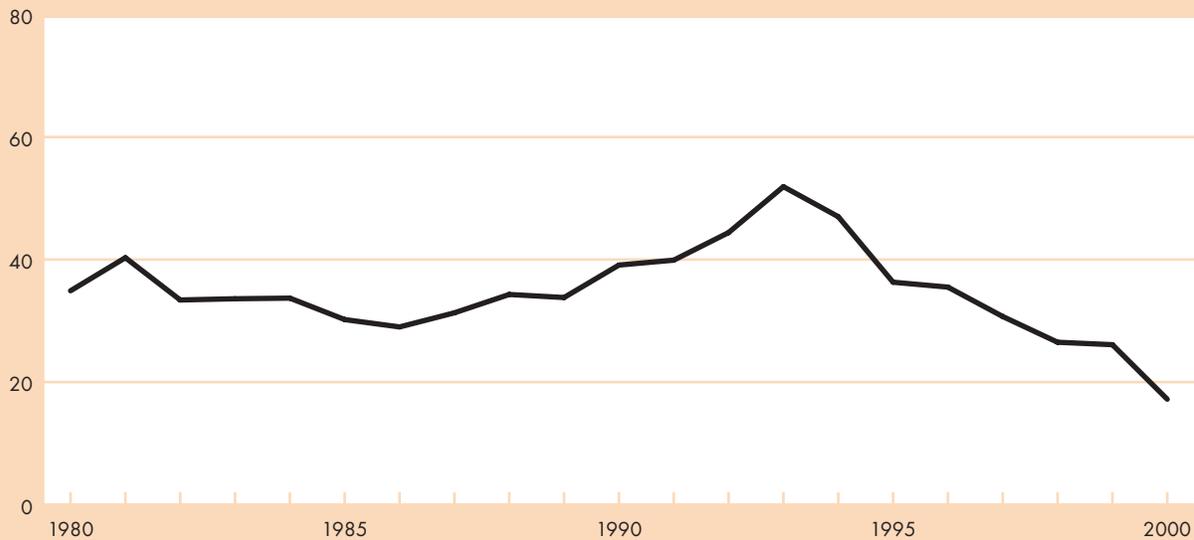
- In 2000, the rate at which youth were victims of serious violent crimes was 16 crimes per 1,000 juveniles ages 12 to 17, totaling about 390,000 such crimes.
- The serious violent crime victimization rate fluctuated between 34 and 43 per 1,000 from 1980 to 1990 and peaked at 44 per 1,000 in 1993. Since 1993, the rate of serious violent crime against youth has decreased by 63 percent, down to 16 per 1,000 in 2000.
- Males are more than twice as likely as females to be victims of serious violent crimes. In 2000, the serious violent crime victimization rate was 23 per 1,000 male youth, compared with 10 per 1,000 female youth.
- In 2000, the serious violent crime victimization rate for youth dropped more for younger teens (ages 12 to 14) than for older teens (ages 15 to 17). In 2000, the rate for older teens dropped to 19 per 1,000 and for younger teens dropped to 14 per 1,000.

The level of youth violence in society can be viewed as an indicator of youths' ability to control their behavior, as well as the adequacy of socializing agents such as families, peers, schools, and religious institutions to supervise or channel youth behavior to acceptable norms. One measure of the serious violent crime committed by juveniles is the incidence rate of serious violent juvenile crime.

Indicator BEH4.B

Serious violent crime offending rate by youth ages 12 to 17, 1980-2000

Crimes per 1,000 youth ages 12-17



NOTE: This rate is the ratio of the number of crimes (aggravated assault, rape, and robbery; i.e., stealing by force or threat of violence) reported to the National Crime Victimization Survey for which the age of the offenders was known, plus the number of homicides reported to police that involved at least one juvenile offender perceived by the victim (or by law enforcement in the case of homicide) to be 12 through 17 years of age, to the number of juveniles in the population. Because of changes made in the victimization survey, data prior to 1992 are adjusted to make them comparable with data collected under the redesigned methodology. Numbers for 2000 are preliminary and do not contain final homicide estimates.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey. Federal Bureau of Investigation, Uniform Crime Reporting Program, Supplementary Homicide Reports.

- According to reports by victims, in 2000 the serious violent crime offending rate was 17 crimes per 1,000 juveniles ages 12 to 17, totaling 413,000 such crimes involving juveniles. This is a 67 percent drop from the 1993 high and the lowest rate recorded since the national victimization survey began in 1973.
- Reports by victims indicate that between 1980 and 1989, the serious violent juvenile crime offending rate fluctuated between 29 and 40 per 1,000, and then began to increase from 34 per 1,000 in 1989 to a high of 52 per 1,000 in 1993. Since then, the rate has steadily dropped, to 17 per 1,000 in 2000.
- Based on victims' reports, since 1980 the percentage of all serious violent crime involving juveniles has ranged from 19 percent in 1982 to 26 percent in 1993, the peak year for youth violence. In 2000, 19 percent of all such victimizations reportedly involved a juvenile offender.

- In more than half (59 percent) of all serious violent juvenile crimes reported by victims in 2000, more than one offender was involved in the incident. Because insufficient detail exists to determine the age of each individual offender when a crime is committed by more than one offender, the number of additional juvenile offenders cannot be determined. Therefore, this rate of serious violent crime offending does not represent the number of juvenile offenders in the population, but rather the number of crimes committed involving juveniles ages 12 to 17 in relation to the juvenile population.

Bullets contain references to data that can be found in Tables BEH4.A and BEH4.B on pages 102-103. Endnotes begin on page 59.

Indicators Needed

Behavior and Social Environment

A broader set of indicators than those presented in this section is needed to adequately monitor the social environment and behaviors of youth. Other behavior and social environment measures are needed on:

- *Indicators of positive behaviors.* The participation of youth in positive activities and the formation of close attachments to family, school, and community have been linked to positive outcomes in research studies. Additional research needs to be conducted to strengthen our understanding of positive activities and the aspects of those activities that protect youth from risk. Then, regular sources of data that can be used to monitor trends in these important areas over time need to be developed. The child care background measure shows participation rates in extracurricular activities such as organized sports, clubs, arts, religious activities, and other school or community activities. In addition, the youth participation in volunteer activities measure was presented as a special feature in the *America's Children 2000* report. Forum agencies are also examining the measurement and influence of young people's feelings of closeness with their parents.
- *Neighborhood environment.* Research shows that growing up in distressed neighborhoods has an effect over and above that of individual or family background characteristics on child well-being. A survey is being implemented that would, for the first time, enable the monitoring of America's communities and neighborhoods over time and identify distressed neighborhoods in which children are living.
- *Youth violence.* According to victim reports, 19 percent of violent crimes in 2000 involved a youth offender between the ages of 12 and 17. Since crime data are reported by victims, not perpetrators, the indicator on serious violent crime offending by youth does not provide critical information on the number and characteristics of youthful offenders involved in serious crime. Additional work is needed to produce a more comprehensive and useful measure of the prevalence of violence among young people.